



are active, but is most likely in late spring. The female deposits eggs in a nest in soil in late spring or early summer. The number of eggs laid depends on the size of the female (the larger her size, the greater the number of eggs), with over 50 eggs possible. Hatching occurs in late summer.

Habitats

Mississippi River

Iowa Status

uncommon; native

Iowa Range

barely enters Iowa waters in southeastern corner

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.

alligator snapping turtle

Macrolemys temminckii

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Reptilia
Order:	Testudines
Family:	Chelydridae

Features

An average-sized alligator snapping turtle is 15 to 26 inches long and weighs 35 to 150 pounds. It is the largest freshwater turtle in the United States. It has three rows of scutes (ridges) on the carapace (upper shell). It has a large head, hooked beak, and a long tail. This turtle cannot withdraw completely into its shell.

Natural History

The alligator snapping turtle is found in permanent water bodies. In Iowa, it has been found only in the Mississippi River. It sits on the bottom of a body of water with its mouth open waiting for prey to come near. The mouth has a pink "lure" that may be wiggled to attract fish. This turtle eats primarily fish, but will eat other animals that come too close to its powerful jaws. It is active at night and rarely swims, preferring to walk on the bottom. Alligator snappers do not become mature until they are at least 11 years old. Mating may occur at any time when the turtles